

DEC. 1, 2009

FEDERAL CONSENT RECEIVED FOR CHESTER BRANCH RAIL PROJECT

The Federal Highway Administration has issued its authorization for the Chester Branch Rehabilitation project, enabling Morris County to seek bids to improve the four-mile active freight line in Roxbury.

The county in February applied to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority for \$5.8 million in federal stimulus funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for this project, contingent upon federal authorization being received.

“The rehabilitation of the Chester Branch meets the intent of the federal stimulus legislation by creating employment opportunities not only during rehabilitation but by the future economic opportunities it will create in Morris County,” said Freeholder Director Gene F. Feyl, who also is a member of the NJTPA Executive Committee. “This project has regional, long-term benefits, and I am thrilled that it has reached this critical milestone.”

The Chester Branch now serves Roxbury Township commercial users, but has the potential to also serve customers in Randolph Township, in particular the former Westinghouse site, now the BETA Corporate Park, Feyl said.

“The corporate park has a rail siding serving the property, and even though there are no current railroad customers, this could change once the rehabilitation work is completed and tenants see a reliable rail service option,” Feyl said.

Efficient use of this rail line has the potential to reduce truck traffic along major roads including, Route 10, Sussex Turnpike, Route 46, Interstate 80 and other arterial roads throughout Morris County, Feyl said. He noted one rail car is approximately equivalent to four tractor trailers.

Details about the Chester Branch Rail Project may be found on the Morris County Transportation Division Web site, www.MorrisDOT.org.

(MORE)

The freight line was donated to the county by Chester Branch, LLC, in October, and the Morristown & Erie Railway has a management agreement with the county to continue to operate on the Chester Branch.

The M&E also operates the two other county-owned rail lines: the High Bridge Branch and the Dover & Rockaway Railroad.

The Chester Branch connects to the High Bridge Branch, and these two lines connect to the NJ Transit line near the Roxbury - Rockaway Township border near West Dewey Avenue, enabling freight service to connect throughout New Jersey and nationwide.

END